7:Munro & Seligman D. E-4. 5 (ca. 1900-1942) 1963
AB6 Ainu AB6

V

HEARTH AND HOME

THE AINU house is commonly called *chisei*, but as we have seen, the ancient name was *kenru*. The house of the Ainu was a place for worship of the *kamui* almost as much as a home. The Ainu seem never to have had temples. The nearest thing to such was the house of the village chief, *sapane-guru*.[1] This was much larger than other houses and was often resorted to on great occasions such as a Bear Festival. I am told that in this district when several families had reared captured bear cubs for sacrifice it was not unusual for all to be included in one celebration at the house of the chief, though this was not an invariable rule.[2] Such a house might hold more than a hundred persons when crowded together. In times of emergency or communal anxiety special services of supplication might be held there, but as a rule every man's house was his temple, enshrining the hearth-fire sacred to Kamui Fuchi.

Immediately outside, the *ramat* of the *kamui* at the *inau* fences, already described, conferred protection and help on those who served them. Moreover, the house and its contents were believed to be permeated by *ramat* from Shiramba Kamui, and because of this it was necessary to perform rites of exorcism to make sure that no evil spirits were lurking about it (see Chapter VI).

[1] The title, which means 'superior person', was given to the chief of a village district (*kotan*). The office was hereditary, the eldest son succeeding unless he was incapable or otherwise objectionable. In the old days an unsatisfactory chief might be killed if he did not mend his ways.—N.G.M.

[2] The salmon ceremony was held in the chief's house. The cult group consisted of the male householders of the locality. The bear ceremony was usually held in each hunter's house in turn.—H.W.